**Delaware**

The soil of the little state of Delaware had more claimants than that of any other of the thirteen original colonies. It lies along the great bay and river of the same name, and its importance consisted in its command of these and of the great fertile valley drained by them. It was first claimed by the Dutch by right of the discovery of Hudson, next by the Swedes, who made the first permanent settlement, and finally it came into the possession of the English. Among the English, Delaware was claimed by Lord Baltimore as part of [Maryland](http://www.usahistory.info/southern/Maryland.html); it next became the property of the Duke of York, was sold by him to William Penn, and only after the Revolution did the inhabitants of Delaware become the owners. Of the original thirteen states Delaware was the only one except [New York](http://www.NewYorkHistory.info/) that was founded by another than the English race.

The first settlement in the territory that afterward became Delaware was made by the Dutch in 1631. Between thirty and forty colonists settled on the Delaware Bay near the site of Lewes; but they were led into a foolish quarrel with the Indians and were massacred to the last man. The quarrel began from a most trivial cause. The Dutch had set up a tin plate bearing the arms of Holland. An Indian, without knowing its meaning, thoughtlessly destroyed it. The Dutch considered this an insult to their nation and demanded that the offender be given up. Thus began the trouble which resulted in the destruction of the whole colony. When De Vries came the following year to visit his colony, he found nothing but heaps of ashes and charred bones.

Even before this unfortunate occurrence the Swedes, under the guidance of the greatest of Sweden's kings, Gustavus Adolphus, were planning to colonize the western bank of the Delaware. It was resolved to "invite colonists from all the other nations of Europe," to exclude slavery, and to make the colony a home for the oppressed of all Christendom. The Swedish king incorporated a company in 1627, took a deep interest in the project, and pronounced it "the jewel of his kingdom."

New Sweden grew by immigration and spread over the surrounding country. It seemed for a time that the whole Delaware Valley would be settled and held by the Scandinavians. But the Dutch were jealous; they came and built Fort Casimir where New Castle now stands, and thus got control of the bay. Soon, however, a Swedish war vessel entered the bay and put an end to the Dutch fort. The blustering Stuyvesant was now governor of New Amsterdam, and he determined to avenge the insult and put an end to New Sweden. He entered the bay with a fleet bearing over six hundred men. The Swedes, who numbered but seven hundred in all, were overawed, and New Sweden, which had existed seventeen years, ceased to exist as a separate colony. The people, however, were permitted to retain possession of their farms, and the community continued to prosper under its new government. The Swedes eventually scattered to various parts and lost their identity and their language; but, like the Huguenots and the Salzburgers, they infused an element of strength into the veins of the future American.

The conquest of New Amsterdam by the English, in 1664, included Delaware, which now became the property of the Duke of York. The Duke's Laws, framed by Nicolls for New York, were at length extended to Delaware, and the people were granted some measure of self-government. In 1682, however, the year of the founding of [Pennsylvania](http://www.usahistory.info/colonies/Pennsylvania.html), the duke sold Delaware to William Penn, and the colony, which came to be called the "Three Lower Counties," or the "Territories," was the same year annexed to Pennsylvania. From this time it was in possession of the Penns and had no separate governor. Though the colony secured a separate legislature in 1702, under a charter of privileges granted by Penn, its history to the time of the Revolution was identified with that of its great neighbor to the North.